

# **Augustine: Philosopher and Saint**

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## A Note on Citations

Because there are so many different editions of Augustine, Plato, and Plotinus, references to their writings in the "Readings" for each lecture do not use page numbers (which would be different for each edition) but a standard reference system.

For **Augustine**, the citations refer to book number (if there is one) then chapter number, then paragraph number (if there is one). For example, "*Confessions* 7:10.16" means *Confessions*, book 7, chapter 10, paragraph 16. (In most of Augustine's treatises, the paragraphs are numbered from the beginning of each book not the beginning of each chapter; therefore you seldom get a reference like 7:5.1, but you often get a reference like 3:1.1—or even 3:2.2 if the paragraphs and chapters coincide, which they sometimes do.) Some editions don't number the paragraphs; so if you're using the Hackett edition of the *Confessions*, for example, you should ignore the number 16 in the above reference and just look for book 7, chapter 10. Also, be aware that if you're using the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* series, the editor of the anti-Pelagian works in that series calls the paragraphs "chapters," so that a reference to *On the Spirit and the Letter* 29.50 refers to what that edition labels *chapter* 50.

For **Plato**, citations refer to marginal page numbers. Most editions of Plato's dialogues should have these standard page numbers printed at the side or in the margin of the text.

For **Plotinus**, citations are by book and treatise. *Enneads* (pronounced "N-E-ads") is the name of Plotinus's collected works. Each *Ennead* is one treatise. There are fifty-four of them grouped into six books, with nine treatises in each book. (*Ennead* is Greek for "group of nine," as *quartet* is English for "group of four.") Thus, for example, *Enneads* 1:6, Plotinus's treatise "On Beauty," is the sixth *Ennead* or treatise in the first book of the collection. All modern editions divide the treatises up into paragraphs, so if you read much about Plotinus you will start seeing citations like "*Enneads* 1:6.8," which means paragraph 8 of the treatise "On Beauty."

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## Augustine: Philosopher and Saint

### Scope:

In this lecture series we examine the life, works, and significance of Augustine, the most influential Christian writer outside of the Bible. We look at him both as Church Father (interpreter of the Bible and teacher of Christian doctrine) and philosopher (one who has given us new concepts of the human heart and its depths). After an introductory look at these two contexts of his work (i.e., as Church Father in lecture 1 and as Christian Platonist philosopher in lecture 2) the series proceeds in three parts.

The first four lectures are devoted to a study of Augustine's life. We look at the *Confessions*, his great spiritual autobiography, from three angles: an *intellectual* angle (spotlighting his passionate search for truth), an *emotional* angle (focusing on the love that drives this search, and the aching sense of loss, grief, and yearning the *Confessions* evokes in order to show how love can go wrong), and a *religious* angle (in which the search for truth leads him to Christ, and the Christian life is conceived of as a journey toward our heavenly home). We then survey Augustine's life following the events narrated in the *Confessions*, especially his career as a Christian writer.

Next a series of three lectures explains key concepts of Augustine's thought, all related to his epochal doctrine of grace. We examine how Augustine relates the human qualities of Faith and love to the divine gift of grace (in lecture 7); how his doctrine of grace addresses troublesome issues like the origin of evil, Original Sin, and predestination (in lecture 8); and how he relates the inward gift of grace to the external side of human life in his teachings about signs, words, sacraments, and the Church (in lecture 9).

The final three lectures address Augustine's concept of persons, both human and divine. We look at Augustine's distinctive concept of the human soul as a private inner world (lecture 10), then at his distinctive way of relating his concept of the soul to the doctrine of the Trinity, which is the orthodox Christian concept of God (lecture 11), and finally at his understanding of God's relationship to specific human communities in history (lecture 12).

### Learning Objectives

Upon completion of these lectures, the student should be able to:

1. Describe the relation of philosophy to Christian doctrine in Augustine's thought.
2. Explain why, for Augustine, love is inseparable from the life of the intellect (and vice versa).
3. Discuss how sin would make you feel if you were in Augustine's shoes.
4. Explain what religion has to do with happiness, according to Augustine.
5. Explain why Augustine came to believe in both free will and predestination and why he thought they were not inconsistent with each other.
6. Explain what Augustine thinks evil is and where he believes it comes from.
7. Discuss the relation of inner and outer in Augustine's thought.
8. State the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity.
9. Discuss at least two problems with or objections to Augustine's thought and how Augustine might try to solve them.

## Lecture 1

### Church Father

**Scope:** This introductory lecture situates Augustine in late antiquity, the historical period between the ancient classical world and the Middle Ages. Augustine is a Church Father, one of the early Christian theologians who established orthodox Christian doctrines and interpretations of the Bible. His lifelong project is to combine key emphases of the Church Fathers (about the Trinity and Christ) with his philosophical interest in the inner connection between God and the soul.

**Objectives**— Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to:

1. Identify Augustine's fundamental concern in his earliest writings.
2. Define *Church Father*.
3. State how the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity answers the question: "Who is God?"
4. Define *Christology*.
5. Explain the difference between the dimension of inner depth and the realm of external things in Augustine's thought.
6. Contrast Western Christianity and Eastern Christianity.
7. Contrast the meanings of *catholic* and *Roman Catholic*.
8. Contrast the meanings of *heretic* and *pagan*.

### Outline

- I. Augustine's Pervasive Influence on Western Thought
  - A. Some sample themes of Augustine's thought
    1. The inner presence of God
    2. Grace as divine inward help
    3. Free will
    4. Outward signs and inner world
  - B. Some uncomfortable (but interesting) themes
    1. Predestination
    2. Sin as heart's loss: the inability to love what we most desire
    3. The Restless Heart: our hearts are restless until they rest in God (opening of the *Confessions*)
    4. God as our goal, as Truth, Wisdom, Love, etc.
- II. Augustine's Location in Western Intellectual History
  - A. Augustine's period, called late antiquity, is the turning point between the classical period and the Middle Ages
  - B. Augustine inherits the riches of classical Roman culture
  - C. Augustine is one of the founders of medieval culture
- III. The Church Fathers (first five centuries A.D.)
  - A. The Church Fathers are ancient, authoritative interpreters of the Christian Bible
  - B. The Church Fathers are formulators of Christian doctrine (moving from Biblical *story* to theological *doctrine*)
    1. Example: the Nicene Creed (Christ is "of one essence with the Father")
    2. Example: the doctrine of the Trinity (God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God)
  - C. Augustine as Church Father

1. Augustine as inheritor of the doctrine of Trinity
2. Augustine's early focus on the inner connection between God and the soul

#### IV. Augustine's Project: Relating the Inward and the External

- A. Exploring inner depths
  1. Augustine's *Soliloquies*: an inward dialogue
  2. Augustine's *Soliloquies*: a mysterious character named Reason enters the scene
  3. Augustine's *Soliloquies*: Augustine wants to know nothing but God and the soul
- B. External things of the Christian faith
  1. The year after Augustine's death the Council of Ephesus (431) formulates the doctrine that Christ's flesh is "life-giving flesh."
  2. Other examples of the external things of the Christian faith all stem from the Incarnation, i.e., from Christ's life-giving flesh: Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, the words of the Bible (containing the Gospel story of Christ), the Christian Sacraments (especially the Eucharist), the Church as the Body of Christ, etc.
- C. Augustine's project is to understand how these external things are connected to the inner relation between God and the soul.

#### V. Some Key Terminology

- A. Western Christianity and Eastern Christianity
- B. Roman Catholics and Protestants are Western Christians
- C. In Augustine's time, *Catholic* meant *orthodox* and hence is broader in meaning than *Roman Catholic*
- D. *orthodox* (small *o*) includes Protestants and Roman Catholics as well as the Eastern Orthodox (capital *O*)
- E. *Heretic* is not equivalent to *non-Christian* or *pagan*; it denotes a Christian who teaches the wrong things about the Christian faith.

#### VI. An Invitation to Join Augustine the Explorer

##### Required Reading:

Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, chapter 4

##### Supplementary Reading:

Augustine, *Confessions* 1:1.1

Augustine, *Soliloquies* 1:1.1-2:7 (in Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Works*, 23-27)

Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, chapters 4-8

Chadwick, *The Early Church*, chapter 9

Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, chapters 9 and 10

##### Questions to Consider:

1. From what you've heard so far, what is it about Augustine that makes you most uneasy? What most intrigues you?
2. What, in your view, is Christianity all about—and how are Augustine's concerns related to that essential core of Christianity?

## Lecture 2

### Christian Platonist

**Scope:** Like other Church Fathers, Augustine combines concepts from Christianity and philosophy, especially the philosophy of Platonism. This lecture centers on an extended thought experiment designed to introduce the student to key elements of Platonist thought which were attractive to Augustine, especially the concept of a nonbodily, eternal mode of being, and how that concept applies to God.

**Objectives—** Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to:

1. Explain the contrast between sensible things and intelligible things in Platonism.
2. Discuss the connection between the concept of a nonbodily mode of being and the concept of eternity.
3. Describe the relation of Understanding and Love in Augustine.
4. Explain why the philosophy of Platonism might be attractive to a religious thinker.

### Outline

- I. Augustine and Philosophy
  - A. The Church Fathers often looked positively upon philosophy
  - B. To understand Augustine, we need to understand the religious attractiveness of certain forms of pagan philosophy, especially Platonism
- II. Platonist Philosophy Gave Augustine the Concept of God as a Nonbodily Being
  - A. Some terminology to help us understand the question: what is a nonbodily mode of being?
    1. Words to avoid: *physical* and *concrete*
    2. Words to use: *bodily* and *corporeal*
  - B. *Sensible* versus *intelligible*
    1. *Sensible* means "perceivable by the senses"
    2. *Intelligible* means "understood by the mind"
    3. Key metaphor: eye of the body versus mind's eye
    4. Imagination is sensible, not intelligible
  - C. It's easier to say what the intelligible is *not*, and there's a reason for this: we're familiar with sensible things but need to learn the intellectual hunger for an understanding of intelligible things
- III. A Mathematical Example
  - A. Imagine a geometry classroom where you're looking at two kinds of triangle: one is drawn on the chalkboard; the other (which you can't see with your bodily eyes) is the pure triangle that the mathematical proofs are really about
  - B. There comes a moment of insight when you suddenly understand what the proof is about. That moment has startling characteristics:
    1. We say: "Aha! now I see it!"
    2. It is a moment of joy
    3. It is the satisfaction of that intellectual hunger
    4. It is like sexual desire and love
    5. But it is pure and clean, free from lust, jealousy, embarrassment, and flesh
  - C. How this mathematical example is connected with religion:
    1. The Real Triangle is Eternal
    2. The Eternal is higher and more real than the sensible



3. Intelligible things are therefore eternal, divine, and spiritual, while sensible things are temporal, mortal, and fleshly.
  4. Intelligible things are also beautiful, according to Platonism
- IV. A Different Kind of Example: the eternal form of a horse, the unchanging intelligible essence that gives form to horses we see and smell and ride, those that are born and die
- V. Another Kind of Example: Eternal Virtues
- A. E.g., the eternal forms or essences, Justice and Wisdom
  - B. Paul calls Christ "the Wisdom of God" in 1 Corinthians 1:24, one of Augustine's favorite biblical passages. This is a key connection in Augustine's Christian Platonism: Christ is the intelligible form of Wisdom
- VI. Christian Platonism
- A. The eternal, intelligible forms that Plato talks about are located, according to the logic of the Christian doctrine of Creation, within God the Creator
  - B. This means that there is an inherent connection between the soul and God (a key theme of Augustine's early work, as mentioned in the previous lecture): every time the soul sees intelligible things with its mind's eye, it is catching a glimpse of God
  - C. For Augustine, the ultimate happiness of eternal life for the soul consists in seeing God fully and completely (the beatific vision)
  - D. Augustine's conviction that seeing the eternal, intelligible God is what we long for most intensely in the depth of our hearts means that for him there is no real separation between intellect and love, mind and emotion

**Required Readings:**

Augustine, *The Essential Augustine*, pp. 62–63 and 123–39

**Supplementary Readings:**

Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, chapter 2

Plato, *Phaedo* 57a-70b and 107c-118a

Plotinus, *Enneads* 1:6 and 5:9

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Could there really be something divine about what we see in a moment of deep insight?
2. *Is* mathematics beautiful, really? Why or why not? (Does it matter which?)

## Lecture 3

### **Confessions: The Search for Wisdom**

**Scope:** We begin now to look at Augustine's life as written in his autobiography, the *Confessions*. In this lecture we examine the *Confessions* from the first of three thematic angles, the intellectual angle, where the theme is the philosophical love of wisdom. We follow his intellectual development from the point at which a book by Cicero sparked his initial interest in philosophy, through the long period in which he sought the truth in the Manichaean heresy, up to the time he encounters "the books of the Platonists," which provide him with a key to understanding God but do not give him the strength he needs to get back to the God he has lost by his sin.

**Objectives**— Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to:

1. Define what *philosophy* means for Augustine.
2. Explain the relation between philosophy and Christianity according to Augustine.
3. Describe the importance of Cicero in Augustine's intellectual development.
4. Summarize the teachings of the Manichaeans.
5. State three intellectual problems of Augustine's to which Platonism provided solutions.
6. Discuss what Augustine learned as a result of reading the books of the Platonists.

### **Outline**

#### **I. Introduction to *Confessions***

- A. Author: Augustine the bishop, age 45 (not to be confused with Augustine the character within the autobiography, ages 1–35)
- B. It is too superficial to interpret this as the story of a wayward youth. It is more like a portrait of the wayward soul—it is meant to apply to all of our souls
- C. In the next three lectures we approach the *Confessions* through three thematic angles (like looking at the same thing from three different sides):
  1. Intellectual angle: the mind's search for truth
  2. Emotional angle: the heart's love and loss
  3. Religious angle: the soul's road home

#### **II. Encountering Philosophy: Cicero's *Hortensius***

- A. The setting of Augustine's youth: Africa as the Bible Belt of the Roman Empire.
- B. Augustine reads Cicero's *Hortensius* (3:4.7–8)
  1. Augustine's rhetorical education—an education geared for political success and involving the study of master orators like Cicero.
  2. But Cicero also wrote an exhortation to philosophize
  3. Augustine's heart is suddenly on fire for Wisdom, "whatever that might be"
  4. The only thing missing was the name of Christ—or was it?
- C. Pagan philosophy aims for Wisdom ("whatever that might be") but does not know the name of Christ. Since Christ is the Wisdom of God (as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:24) this means philosophy seeks the reality of Wisdom but does not know its name

#### **III. Joining the Heretics: Manichaeism**

- A. Soon after reading Cicero, Augustine turns to the Christian Scriptures but quickly rejects them because he is too proud to understand their humble words (3:5.9)
- B. The Manichaeans (3:6.10–7.12 and 5:10.18–20)

1. The Manichaean heretics were the opposite of the pagan philosophers: they knew the right names (e.g., Christ) but knew nothing of the reality
2. The Manichaeans were **materialists**, believing that even God was a material, visible thing (i.e., the light of the heavens)
3. The Manichaeans were **rationalists**, criticizing the Catholics for insisting on the importance of faith
4. The Manichaeans were **dualists**, thinking that everything that existed was made up either of the Good Stuff (divine light) or the Bad Stuff (dark, evil, filthy matter). They thought this contempt for the material or bodily side of life made them more spiritual. They thought of the human soul as a fragment of divine light trapped in a filthy body after the cosmic battle that began the world.
5. Augustine's attraction to Manichaeism had a lot to do with the fact that he was (according to his own self-portrait) a smart "snot-nosed" kid (3:12.21).

#### IV. Catholic Teaching: Ambrose

- A. Ambition takes Augustine to Milan and Ambrose (5:13.23)
- B. Ambrose teaches Augustine a nonliteral interpretation of the Scriptures, which helps him understand why the Manichaeans are wrong about the Catholics (5:14.24–25)
- C. Milan was a center of Christian Platonism

#### V. Platonist Vision: In Then Up (*Confessions* 7)

- A. On the brink of his conversion, Augustine was struggling with three interrelated problems:
  1. Trying to see a nonbodily substance (7:1.1)
  2. Striving to understand the omnipresence of God (7:1.2)
  3. Asking where evil comes from (*unde malum*) (7:5.7)
- B. Augustine *suffers* from his intellectual questions (7:7.11)
- C. Augustine encounters “the books of the Platonists” (7:9.13–15)
- D. Augustine finally glimpses the divine Truth (7:10.16)
  1. Grace: God is his guide
  2. Inward turn: the nature of the soul is his clue (for the soul is incorporeal, like God)
  3. Looking upward: he sees God above his own mind, the light by which his mind's eye sees
  4. Dazzled eyes: he can't keep looking that way for long, because the glory of God is too bright for his mind's eye to gaze at
- E. What Augustine learned from his moment of Platonist vision:
  1. Truth (i.e., God) is incorporeal and omnipresent (7:10.16)
  2. All that God created is good (7:13.19–15.21)
  3. Evil is not a form of being but the corruption of a thing's being (7:11.17–12.18)
  4. Evil comes from corruption of will (7:16.22)
- F. But a moment of Platonist philosophical vision was not enough. This is where Christianity comes in...see lecture 5.

#### Required Reading:

Augustine, *Confessions*, books 3, 5, and 7

Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, chapters 4–5, 8–11

#### Supplementary Reading:

Augustine, *Confessions*, book 1 (Augustine's childhood and schooling)

Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo*, chapters 4 and 5 (on Manichaeism and Augustine's writings against it)

O'Meara, *Young Augustine*, chapters 4–10 (Augustine's intellectual development from Manichaeism to Platonism)

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Augustine portrays the search for Wisdom and Truth as central to his life. Does it make sense to live life like that? (Is it impractical? Or is that search already central to all our lives, even if we don't realize it? Can such a search possibly make us happy?)
2. Does Augustine's inward turn and glimpse of God (his movement "in then up") seem like anything you're familiar with?

## Lecture 4

### **Confessions: Love and Tears**

**Scope:** This lecture examines the *Confessions* from the emotional angle, looking at its portrait of love and loss and its diagnosis of human grief as a symptom of the soul's wandering far from God. The key focal points from this angle are the character of Augustine's mother, Monica, and the death in *Confessions* 4 of the unnamed friend.

**Objectives**— Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to:

1. Describe the connection between philosophy and love in Augustine.
2. State Augustine's theory about the nature of friendship.
3. Explain the connection between mortal loves and grief, according to Augustine.
4. Describe Augustine's relationship with his concubine, distinguishing it both from marriage and from promiscuity.
5. Explain the saying: "The son of these tears cannot perish."
6. Summarize Monica's importance in Augustine's life.
7. Describe the emotional "feel" of the soul's wanderings far from God, according to Augustine.

### **Outline**

- I. Seeking and Finding as Themes in Augustine's Life
  - A. *Philosophy*, which literally means "love of wisdom," is for Augustine a form of seeking
  - B. For ancient philosophers, all seeking was aimed at finding happiness. What Augustine wants as a Platonist philosopher is to find a happiness that can't be lost.
  - C. For Augustine, life in this world is a journey toward an eternal happiness with God.
- II. *Confessions* 4: On Loving What Can Be Lost
  - A. Incident: death of Augustine's unnamed friend
    1. They started out as Manichaeans together
    2. Mortally ill, the friend is baptized while unconscious, and this is enough to convert him!
    3. God in his mercy snatches Augustine's friend from him, lest he be corrupted again by Manichaeism.
  - B. Reflection: why it hurt so
    1. Augustine's exquisite description of the world of grief
    2. Augustine's theory is that friendship is a form of love that unites souls. Death tears apart this union, and grief is the wound that results.
    3. The extraordinary thing about the *Confessions* is how Augustine's literary art makes this theory palpable to his readers.
  - C. Conclusion: loving your friend in God
    1. Augustine tried to find comfort in God, but his imaginary Manichaean God could give no comfort. (Augustine is not one of those who think religious illusions can be comforting.)
    2. The solution to the problem of grief is to learn to love what can't be lost: love God and your friend in God.
  - D. Appendix: concubine as friend
    1. The rumors about Augustine's wild youthful sex life are seriously exaggerated. After some adolescent experimentation (how much is hard to tell) he settled down with one woman for a dozen years.
    2. She was a *concubine*, which meant something similar to what we call a "common-law wife."
    3. He describes his loss of her in the same terms with which he describes the loss of his unnamed friend (6:15.25)

4. In the end, one of the things she taught him was the importance of rising above sexual desires (6:15.25)
5. Augustine is not obsessed with sex (as some critics think). Intellectually at least, he's much more interested in friendship. He simply recognizes that sex becomes a deeply ingrained habit that is hard to break (after a dozen years).

### III. Monica

#### A. Monica, the formidable Catholic mother

1. Monica is one of the strongest female characters in ancient literature and must have been a formidable parent.
2. In Augustine's youth, Monica's voice is that of Catholic piety; she warns him against fornication and adultery in words that ultimately were not her own but God's (2:3.7)

#### B. Monica's dream (2:11.19–20)

1. Monica dreams about her heretic son standing on the Rule of Faith and an angel telling her, "where you are, there he shall be" (3:11.19)
2. Monica resists her son's attempt to reinterpret her dream in support of his heresy (3:11.20). (This lady knows her mind, and it's *Catholic*.)

#### C. Monica "on the outskirts of Babylon" (2:3.8)

1. She has ambitions for her brilliant boy so she discourages him from marrying too young; she thereby deprives him of the most effective remedy against adolescent lust (2:3.8).
2. She has him wait to be baptized until he's gotten over his adolescent lusts (1:11.17)
3. When he's in his thirties and has climbed the ladder of success for a decade, she arranges an advantageous marriage for him to an underage Christian heiress—an arrangement that gets in the way of Augustine's dedication to the spiritual life (6:6.13.23)

#### D. Monica's tears

1. When she weeps over her heretic son, a priest promises her "The son of these tears cannot perish" (3:12.21)
2. She weeps again when Augustine ditches her to leave for Italy (5:8.14–15)
3. Her tears are an impure mixture of concern for her son's soul and desire for his physical presence ("smother love")
4. Her tears are thus both a sign of God's love predestining Augustine to salvation and a sign that Monica's own love for him needs to be purified

#### E. Monica eventually follows her son to Italy

1. Her admiration and deference for Ambrose (6:1.1–2.2)
2. When Augustine is converted and returns to the Church, Monica is nearby (8:12.30).
3. In an astonishing instance of shared mysticism, she has, with Augustine, a vision of divine Wisdom at Ostia (9:10.23–26).
4. The vision at Ostia symbolizes the ultimate unity of philosophy and faith, Reason and Authority—Augustine and Monica.

#### F. Augustine's tears for Monica

1. She dies far from home but knows that the location of her body doesn't matter (6:11.27)
2. At her funeral, Augustine tries to restrain his grief but can't—more impure tears (9:12.29–33)
3. The narrative of the Confessions ends with Augustine's hope that we who read it may pray for his parents' souls (9:13.37)

- IV. What it feels like to be a soul on its journey
- A. To sin is to flee the inescapable (omnipresent) Good
  - B. Sin means losing what we most love
  - C. Augustine the sinner feels grief rather than guilt
  - D. Prayer and longing as the best state for the soul on its journey

**Required Reading:**

Augustine, *Confessions*, books 2, 4, and 9; also 5:8.14–9.17

**Supplementary Reading:**

Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, chapters 2 and 6

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Is Augustine right about how grief feels—and what it means?
2. Does Monica remind you of anybody you know?

## Lecture 5

### Confessions: The Road Home

**Scope:** In this lecture we look at the *Confessions* from the religious angle, which means we focus on how the soul returns to God. This requires us to focus on the role of Christ incarnate (the end of book 7), the indispensability of the Church (book 8), the shape of the Christian life (book 10), the meaning and interpretation of the Scriptures (book 12), and what Christians really mean by "going to heaven" (book 13). In particular, Augustine's famous conversion comes under consideration here as a discovery about the indispensability of the Church, brought on by a recognition of the inadequacy of Platonist vision, the weakness of the human will, and the insufficiency of mere private belief.

**Objectives**— Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to:

1. Explain the role of Christ incarnate in Augustine's account of the soul's return to God.
2. Discuss the motives and meaning of Augustine's conversion.
3. Explain Augustine's concept of inner conflict.
4. Describe the role of books and reading in Augustine's conversion.
5. Summarize Augustine's view of the three basic forms of temptation.
6. Explain Augustine's famous saying, "My will is my weight."

### Outline

- I. Where Christ comes in (*Confessions* 7:18.24–21.27)
  - A. As God, Christ is the Goal, as man he is the Way
  - B. A momentary glimpse of God is not enough: we need a way home
  - C. The Incarnation is the humility of God stooping to show us the way out of our sin and pride
  - D. Christ can only be found in the Church, his Body
  - E. The Augustinian theme of Reason and Authority—what we understand with our minds and what we believe by faith in the divine and authoritative teaching of the Church
- II. Augustine's conversion (*Confessions* 8)
  - A. A growing sense of crisis leads to Augustine's conversion
    1. Temporary skepticism: no longer a Manichaean but not yet a Catholic, young Augustine adopts a position of skepticism (5:14.25)
    2. Many years' delay: it's been about a dozen years reading the *Hortensius*, and he still hasn't dedicated his life to seeking wisdom! (6:11.18)
    3. The need for free time: how can he pursue philosophy when he has no time to read and think but has to spend all his time teaching rhetoric—mere empty words! (6:11.18)
    4. No more excuses: his present mode of life comes to seem increasingly untenable and inexcusable.
    5. The key obstacle: he is engaged to be married, has sent away his concubine, but can't seem to give up sex—and so takes another concubine while he's waiting to marry an underage Christian heiress (6:13.23–15.25)
  - B. Do walls make a Christian? Augustine hears the story of Victorinus, a rhetorician and philosopher who converted to the Christian faith and discovered that private belief wasn't enough: he needed to enter the walls of the Church and be baptized (8:2.3–5)
  - C. The problem of will
    1. The will in self-conflict: Augustine wants to dedicate his whole heart to the pursuit of wisdom, but he can't give up his sexual habit. He dramatizes this problem as an inner conflict between two competing wills (8:8.19–9.21)
    2. His famous half-hearted prayer at this time was: "Lord, give me continence, but not yet!" (8:7.17)



3. The chain of habit: it is as if his own will had made of itself a chain with which to bind itself (8:5.10)
  4. I but not I: his new, good will was his true self, but it was not strong enough to overcome the habits of his old will—which was his own fault.
- D.** Stories about books: Pontitianus tells Augustine about how reading a Christian book changed his life (8:6.13-15)
- E.** "Take and read": in the famous scene in the garden in Milan, Augustine hears a voice tell him to "take and read"; he snatches up the writings of the apostle Paul, reads the first passage he lays eyes on, and is suddenly converted.
- F.** The results
1. He tastes the sweetness of grace: suddenly it is easy and sweet to will what is right, and the chains of old habit drop away
  2. He quits his teaching job to go into research full time
  3. He envisions a new future as a full-time seeker of the truth.
  4. He is finally ready to get baptized
  5. He has discovered the way back to the vision of God, a way consisting of Christ, Church, and Scriptures: the inner vision of our heavenly home has been supplemented with an external way to take on our journey home.
- III.** Augustine on his present situation (*Confessions* 10)
- A.** The memory of God
1. Having caught a glimpse of God with his mind's eye, (in *Confessions* 7) he can now love the real God, instead of a figment of his imagination (10:6.8).
  2. Augustine's love for God is based on a memory of that vision: hence he launches into a long inquiry into the nature of memory, asking how it is that we can remember *God* (10:7.11-26.37)
  3. His conclusion is that we all remember a happy life we once had with God, presumably before our souls were in this body (10:20.29-24.35)
- B.** The hinge on which the whole *Confessions* turns comes in the middle of book 10: "Late have I loved You, O Beauty so ancient and so new. For behold, you were within, but I was without" (10:27.38)
- C.** After this point, Augustine looks forward to the rest of his life on earth as a journey full of temptations and spends the second half of book 10 discussing the temptations of this mortal life (following the formula of 1 John 2:16):
1. "The lust of the flesh": each of the five senses offers its own particular temptations
  2. "The lust of the eyes": idle curiosity
  3. "The pride of life": pride as the deepest sin of all
- D.** At the end of book 10, Augustine focuses again on Christ (10:48.68):
1. His humility counters our pride
  2. In his humility he shares our mortality
  3. His righteousness counters our sin
  4. In his humility he shares his righteousness with us sinners.
  5. Hence the end of book 10 echoes the "hinge": "How you have loved us, O Father, who spared not your only Son but gave him up for us sinners—how you have loved us!" (10:47.68)
- IV.** Interpreting Genesis (*Confessions* 11–13)
- A.** Why interpret Genesis?
1. To understand God's Creation (versus the Manichaeon view that earthly existence is evil)
  2. To understand the cosmos in which our soul's journey takes place
  3. To understand the beginning helps us understand the end: our goal is related to our origin, our end is related to our beginning
- B.** Our heavenly home

1. Augustine discovers hints of our heavenly home (the "heaven of heavens") in Genesis (12:1.1–16.23)
2. Augustine's famous saying, "My will is my weight" (13:9.10), is meant to explain how our loves drive us in whatever direction we go—up to heaven or down to earth
3. Our will comes to rest in what makes us ultimately happy. Our hearts are restless until that happens—i.e., until we rest in God (1:1.1)!

**Required Reading:**

Augustine, *Confessions*, books 8 and 10

Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, chapter 16

**Supplementary Reading:**

Augustine, *Confessions*, books 11–13

O'Connell, *Soundings in St. Augustine's Imagination*, chapters 1–3 (images of coming home in Augustine)

O'Donnell, *Augustine*, chapter 5 (particularly good on *Confessions*, books 10 and 11–13).

O'Meara, *Young Augustine*, chapters 11 and 12 (a study of Augustine's conversion).

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Have you ever tried to choose something wholeheartedly—and failed? What happened? Does Augustine's description of self-conflict explain it?
2. What would it be like, really, to love God? Does Augustine help us understand that?

## Lecture 6

### Augustine's Career as a Christian Writer

**Scope:** In this lecture we examine Augustine's life after the period covered in the *Confessions*. Focusing primarily on his career as a Christian writer, we can divide Augustine's life into three periods. In the early period, up to the writing of *Confessions*, he works on philosophical issues and on refuting the Manichaeans; in the middle period he focuses on the nature of the Church and its Sacraments, refuting the Donatists; and in the last period of his life he is preoccupied with the doctrine of grace, in refutation of the Pelagians.

**Objectives—**Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to:

1. Identify three periods of Augustine's career as a Christian writer.
2. Describe how Augustine became a priest.
3. Explain the issues that divided Donatists from Catholics.
4. Explain Augustine's role as a theorist of religious coercion.
5. Summarize Pelagian doctrine.
6. State three Augustinian arguments for the necessity of grace.

### Outline

- I. Introduction: The Periods of Augustine's Career
- II. Early Period: From Convert to Bishop (386–95)
  - A. Conversion and free time
    1. The Cassiciacum writings: after his conversion, Augustine retires to a villa with friends to study philosophy and write Christian philosophical dialogues
    2. In these dialogues, he proposes a curriculum of studies in the liberal arts, leading to philosophy and wisdom.
  - B. From Milan to Hippo
    1. Returning from Cassiciacum to Milan, he is catechized (instructed for baptism and taught the creed) by Ambrose
    2. Returning from Italy to Africa after the death of his mother, he starts what is in effect a monastery in his hometown—thereby introducing monastic life to Africa
    3. He is back in the Bible Belt—the sophisticated philosophical Christian; up on the latest theological developments; answering curious questions from his fundamentalist friends, as well as refuting the Manichaeans
    4. He makes a big hit with the African Church—so big that he is forced into ordination as a priest when he visits the town of Hippo.
    5. Now his free time is gone, as well as his monastic life: he has become a parish priest whose job is not to write philosophical dialogues but to teach the Scriptures to ordinary, mostly illiterate folk
  - C. Thus Augustine's early period takes him from the liberal disciplines to Christian doctrine
    1. Early philosophical dialogues
    2. Refuting the Manichaeans
    3. Teaching the Scriptures
    4. *Confessions* and *On Christian Doctrine*
- III. Against the Donatists: The Unity of the Church
  - A. The history of the Donatist controversy

1. The origin of Donatism: the Donatists were a group of African Christians who broke off from the Catholic Church because they thought it was impure, tainted by cooperation with Roman authorities back in the days of persecution. Some Catholic bishops were accused of being *traditores*, who handed over the sacred books to the persecutors.
  2. Baptism as key issue: the Donatists did not regard Catholic baptism as valid, because it was administered by bishops and priests whose ordination goes back to *traditores*. Catholic clergy were thus tainted and impure according to the Donatists.
  3. The suppression of the Donatists: after the Conference of Carthage (411 A.D.), at which Catholic and Donatist bishops held an official debate in front of an imperial official (with Augustine leading the Catholic side), the empire suppresses the Donatists, fining them and confiscating their property.
  4. Theorist of religious coercion: Augustine provided theological rationale for the suppression of the Donatists.
- B. Three issues in the Donatist controversy (see lecture 9)**
1. The purity of the Church: is the Church a gathering of the Pure, as the Donatists insist?
  2. The unity of the Church: how does the Church stay one Church? (By love, not purity, Augustine insists)
  3. Rebaptism: should Catholics regard Donatist baptism as valid, or should they (like the Donatists) practice rebaptism? This is the trickiest issue Augustine faced in the controversy
- IV. Against the Pelagians: the Necessity of Grace**
- A. Pelagianism: a theology optimistic about human ability to be sinless**
1. Pelagius, a British monk, is regarded as the founder of the heresy that was named after him (though some scholars think he got a bum rap)
  2. Pelagianism: we have the ability to obey
  3. Pelagianism: God helps us by giving us the Law
  4. Pelagianism: if we work at it, we can be perfect
- B. Three Augustinian arguments for the necessity of grace (or: why we can't avoid sin without divine help)**
1. Catholics pray "forgive us our trespasses"—why, if they didn't need grace?
  2. Catholics baptize infants—why, if they didn't need it?
  3. Without grace our obedience is servile (see next lecture)

**Required Reading:**

Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, chapters 11, 13–15, 19–21, and 29–31

**Supplementary Reading:**

Augustine, *On Baptism, against the Donatists*, book 1 and 2:13.18–19.25 (in the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* series, vol. 4, pp. 411–24 and 440–46).

Augustine, *On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sin, and on the Baptism of Infants* 1:1.1–26.39 (in the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* series, vol. 5, pp. 15–30)—the key treatise on Original Sin.

Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo*, chapters 6 and 8 (history of Donatist and Pelagian controversies).

Markus, *Saeculum*, chapter 6 (Augustine as theorist of coercion)

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Does this sound like the same person we read about in the *Confessions*? What has changed, and what has remained the same in Augustine's life since then?
2. In the second half of his life, Augustine spent a great deal of his time and energy arguing against heretics and trying to show that Catholic teaching was true. Was that a good thing?

## Lecture 7

### Faith, Love, and Grace

**Scope:** We begin now to examine Augustine's doctrine of grace, which is his most important contribution to Western thought. In this lecture we examine the key concepts of Faith (and related concepts such as Authority and Understanding) and Love (and related concepts such as Charity, using and enjoying, Beauty, and Will) and look at grace as the inner connection between Faith and Love.

**Objectives**— Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to:

1. Explain the relation between Faith and Understanding in Augustine.
2. Explain the concept of authority in Augustine.
3. Define *Charity*, contrast it with other kinds of love, and distinguish it from almsgiving.
4. Explain the contrast between use and enjoyment in Augustine.
5. Explain the connection between Love and Beauty in Augustine.
6. Explain the connection between Faith and Love in Augustine.

### Outline

#### I. Faith and Understanding

##### A. Understanding is the goal

1. Happiness is beatific vision (literally "the seeing that makes happy") which means seeing God
2. Beatific vision is intellectual vision (i.e., seeing with the *mind's* eye—*understanding* him)
3. Our problem is that our mind's eye is weak, sick, and impure, not ready to see God

##### B. Faith is the Way

1. Our minds are purified (and justified) by Faith.
2. Augustine's motto here is "Unless you believe, you will not understand."
3. Belief is based on Authority, as Understanding is based on Reason.
4. Authority is opaque: it requires us to believe what we cannot yet understand, trusting in what we're taught without being able to see it for ourselves.

##### C. Faith and Love

1. Faith leads ultimately to Understanding, but first of all it leads to Charity or the Love of God.
2. The key biblical text here is 1 Corinthians 13:13, which lists Faith, Hope, and Charity as the key Christian virtues.

#### II. Love and Happiness

##### A. Charity

1. Charity is one kind of love
2. In contrast to modern usage, when Augustine speaks of "Charity" he means more than just giving to the poor
3. Charity is obedience to Jesus' twofold command of love: love for God and love for neighbor
4. Charity is not the same thing as unselfishness: for Augustine, Charity is the way we seek ultimate happiness
5. Charity includes love of neighbor—helping our neighbor find the same ultimate happiness we are seeking, i.e., God
6. Charity is the opposite of cupidity or concupiscence
7. Compare "My will is my weight" in *Confessions* 10:27.38 (see lecture 5)
8. Love unites us with what we love; hence Charity, which is the love of God and neighbor, unites us with God and neighbor—and this is what Augustine means by "heaven"

- B. Use and enjoyment (*On Christian Doctrine*, book 1)
  - 1. Using is a form of love, according to Augustine
  - 2. We should use temporal things to get eternal things—like using the road to get to the destination. We love the road (this earth, this mortal life) *for the sake of* the destination.
  - 3. *Enjoying* means using with delight, clinging to something for its own sake, trying to find our happiness in it
  - 4. *Cupidity* means trying to find our ultimate happiness by enjoying something other than God. It makes us miserable, as the *Confessions* illustrates.
  - 5. Enjoying God is the only thing that can make us ultimately happy.
  - 6. Love unites us with what we love: hence enjoying God means being united with him
  - 7. We can enjoy our neighbors *in God*, i.e., being joined to them as one body joined to God (like spokes of a wheel all joined at one hub)
- C. Beauty and will
  - 1. Augustine's concept of Charity owes a great deal to Plato's concept of *eros* in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, especially in the following respects:
    - a. We love what we see as beautiful
    - b. Love aspires upward to eternal Beauty
    - c. Love is at the deepest desire of our souls
    - d. Love is beyond the control of our will (as anyone who has ever fallen in love knows)

### III. Grace

- A. Justification by Grace
  - 1. Definitions: *justification* (= being made righteous), *righteousness* (= justice), *grace* (= gift of God)
  - 2. For Paul and Augustine "righteousness" means Charity (i.e., obedience to Jesus' twofold command of love)
  - 3. Augustine's key treatise on the doctrine of justification (i.e., on how we become righteous) is *On the Spirit and the Letter*
  - 4. The key contrast in this treatise is slavish obedience versus filial obedience, i.e., obeying God's law out of fear or obeying it out of love
  - 5. True obedience (= righteousness = Charity) is a gift of God's grace, not a result of our efforts to obey ("works of the law" as Paul calls them)
  - 6. Justification by faith: we become righteous by praying for grace
  - 7. What God's grace does is cause us to delight in obedience. ("Everything is easy for love" as Augustine says)
  - 8. Using a metaphor from Romans 5:5, Augustine calls it "infused love"—it is as if God poured love into our souls from above.
  - 9. Another metaphor for grace is inner teaching.
  - 10. Grace is a gift of the Holy Spirit—we come to love God because God's own Spirit dwells within us in response to our prayer for grace.
  - 11. The connection between Faith and Charity: in faith we pray for grace, and what we get is the ability to love God, which we couldn't do before.

**B. Faith as a gift**

1. The late anti-Pelagian treatises raise the issue of predestination
2. Justification is by faith—but where does faith come from? Augustine, like Plato, thinks love isn't within our own power, but what about faith? Isn't it up to us whether we believe or not? In the late anti-Pelagian treatises Augustine answers "no."
3. Troubling conclusions: if even Faith is ultimately a gift of God, then whether we are saved or not is ultimately up to God, not us. Some people find this comforting, others terrifying. See next lecture.

**Required Reading:**

Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, book 1

Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, 1.1–15.42 (in Burnaby, *Augustine: Later Works*)

Augustine, *The Essential Augustine*, pp. 23–33 (readings on Faith and Understanding)

**Supplementary Reading:**

Augustine, *On Free Will*, book 1

Augustine, Sermons on the first Letter of John (in Burnaby, *Augustine: Later Works*)

Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, chapter 15

Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, chapters 4 and 5 (fundamental study of Augustine's view of love)

Nygren, *Eros and Agape*, pp. 476–558 (famous critique of Augustine's view of love as too Platonist)

Plato, *Phaedrus* 244a–257b

Plato, *Symposium* 199c–212b

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What does "Faith" mean to you? Is your concept of faith similar to Augustine's?
2. Augustine thinks we cannot love or be happy without the inner help of God's grace. Is this a comforting thought or a troubling one?

## Lecture 8

### Evil, Free Will, Original Sin, and Predestination

**Scope:** In this lecture we continue our examination of Augustine's doctrine of grace by looking at the dark side, the way it deals with evil and sin. Much of what is most troubling about Augustine is found here, close to what is most beautiful. Augustine uses the concept of free will to explain where evil comes from; he uses the concept of Original Sin to explain why we need grace; and near the end of his life he finds that his concept of grace leads him to the concept of predestination.

**Objectives—** Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to:

1. State Augustine's answer to the question: whence evil?
2. Explain why Augustine thinks of sin as a form of bondage rather than a form of freedom.
3. Define Original Sin, distinguishing it from related concepts such as the Fall and the corruption of human nature.
4. Explain why Augustine believes unbaptized infants are damned.
5. Describe how grace affects free will.
6. Define *predestination*.
7. Summarize the objections most commonly raised against Augustine's doctrine of predestination.

### Outline

#### I. The Origin of Evil

##### A. Recap from *Confessions* 7 (see lecture 3)

1. God created all things and made them all good
2. Evil is a corruption of being (like a hole in a shirt, rot in a tree, disease in a body, or blindness in an eye)
3. The ordered relation of better and worse, nobler and inferior, even punishment, all contribute to the overall good of the universe and therefore are not ultimately evil
4. Evil originates from our free will

##### B. Free will

1. Will is the power of choice
2. For Augustine, every act of the will is an act of love
3. Love seeks to be united to some good
4. Sin is perversity of the will, i.e., its turning away from God, the supreme good
5. Free will (for Augustine) means freedom from external coercion—not autonomy or freedom from God, who is our ultimate and innermost good
6. For Augustine, as for Plato and Paul, true freedom means the freedom to love that which will make us ultimately happy
7. Hence for Augustine all sin is a form of bondage not freedom. Sin stems from a defect in our free will, as blindness stems from a defect in our eyes

#### II. Original Sin

- A. Because of Adam's sin, we are born with a corrupted nature (as if human nature itself, and not just individual human beings, suffered from a disease).
- B. Because of this corrupted nature, we find it impossible not to sin. We still have free will, but our free will is too weak (corrupted, diseased) to be free from sin
- C. Original Sin means more than this corrupted nature. It means that we share in the guilt of Adam's sin. Original sin is not just Adam's sin but *ours*!



- D. In addition to Original Sin, we are of course guilty of committing our own sins ("actual sin")
- E. Because every human being after Adam is born in (Original) Sin, even infants are not innocent and suffer damnation if not baptized.

### III. Grace and free will

- A. Grace is an inner connection with Christ (as our Original Sin is an inner connection with Adam)
- B. Grace is the inward power of eternal beauty, which causes us to love and delight in what is right and good.
- C. Grace heals the will that is corrupted and diseased by sin.
- D. Grace helps the will that is weak (convalescing).
- E. Grace is irresistible but not coercive; it moves our will inwardly not externally
- F. Merit is based on grace, not the other way around
- G. God's grace keeping us in Charity to the end of our lives is called "the gift of perseverance." This is a gift we can only pray for, because nothing we do now determines the choices we make from now until the hour of our death.

### IV. Predestination

- A. Definitions
  - 1. Predestination is not determinism: it does not stem from physical causes but from God's plan
  - 2. Predestination is more than foreknowledge: it is God deciding what he shall do (and therefore what shall happen)
  - 3. Predestination is God's eternal plan to give grace to some and not to others
- B. The central biblical concept behind Augustinian predestination: chosen people
  - 1. The biblical notion of election (i.e., of God choosing some people and not others)
  - 2. The central example of election: "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated" (Romans 9:13)
  - 3. Grace as divine favor: according to the Bible, God has a favorite son.
  - 4. Augustinian predestination is *eternal* election
- C. Problems with Augustine's concept of predestination
  - 1. Is human freedom ultimately powerless? (Augustine answers that sinful human freedom is indeed in bondage to such a degree that it does not have the power to save us without grace)
  - 2. Is God unfair? (Augustine answers that God is inequitable but not unjust: beginning with a human race that is one "mass of damnation," God chooses to rescue some who deserve to be damned and not to rescue others who deserve to be damned)
  - 3. "Double" predestination: if God predestines some to salvation, isn't he predestining the rest to damnation? (Augustine at least once answers "yes")
  - 4. The inscrutability of God's choices: Augustine quotes Romans 11:33: "O the depth of the wisdom of God..." An odd conclusion to be arrived at by a man whose goal in life has been to *understand* God!
  - 5. Final suggestion: perhaps what is ultimately at stake here is a key point of incompatibility between Platonist philosophy and the biblical portrait of God: does it make sense to say that God *makes* choices, as he seems to in the Bible? If it does, then God must be more like a person than like an eternal form.

#### Required Reading:

Augustine, *Enchiridion* chapters 9–14, 23–55, 95–108

Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter*, 29.50–34.60

Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, chapters 15 and 32–34

#### Supplementary Reading:

Augustine, *On Free Will*, book 3 (for Augustine's early views on free will, two decades before the Pelagian controversy).

Augustine, key anti-Pelagian treatises, all found in the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* series, vol. 5: *On Grace and Free Will*

*On Nature and Grace*

*On the Predestination of the Saints*

*On the Gift of Perseverance*

Augustine, *The Essential Augustine*, chapter 8

Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo*, chapter 9

O'Donnell, *Augustine*, chapter 4

Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, chapter 6

TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, pp. 313–38

**Questions to Consider:**

1. It has been said that "Original Sin is the one Christian doctrine for which there is empirical proof" (i.e., all you have to do is look around you and you see evidence of it). Do you think that's true?
2. Can you separate out what there is to like and to not like about the concept of a chosen people?

## Lecture 9

### Signs and Sacraments

**Scope:** In this lecture we connect Augustine's doctrine of grace with external things like words and Sacraments, the Bible, and the rituals of the Church. The overarching concept Augustine uses to explain the value of these external things in a Christian's religious life is the concept of signs. Hence the lecture focuses on Augustine's theory of signs (or *semiotics*) and its application to the Bible and the Sacraments.

**Objectives**— Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to:

1. Define *semiotics*.
2. Contrast natural and "given" signs in Augustine's semiotics.
3. Explain the connection between inner and outer in Augustine's semiotics.
4. Discuss Augustine's theory of biblical interpretation.
5. Compare Augustine's view of sacramental efficacy with that of later medieval theologians.
6. Contrast sacramental validity and sacramental efficacy.
7. Describe the inward channel of grace in Augustine's doctrine of grace.

### Outline

#### I. Introduction to the Issue

- A. How do you know you're chosen?
  1. A Jewish answer: you're born among the chosen people (but what about the Gentiles?)
  2. A Roman Catholic answer: you're baptized into the New Israel (but you must persevere)
  3. A Protestant answer: you believe God's promise (but are you sure you truly believe?)
- B. The inner and the outer in the Augustinian tradition
  1. Grace is an inward gift
  2. Words and Sacraments serve as outward signs of that inner gift
  3. *Expressionism*, the concept of outward signs expressing inner realities, originates with Augustine

#### II. Augustine's Semiotics (= "theory of signs")

- A. What is a sign? (*On Christian Doctrine* 2:1.1-22)
  1. A sign (*signum*) signifies a thing (*res*)
  2. Definition of *sign*: a thing which, in addition to the impression it makes upon the senses, makes something else come into our thoughts
  3. Natural signs (e.g., smoke as a sign of fire)
  4. "Given" or communicative signs (e.g., words)
  5. Divinely given signs (Scripture and Sacraments)
- B. "Given" signs as expressions of what lies within
  1. The cause of signs: our will to communicate
  2. The purpose of signs: to express the **Soul's** will to communicate
  3. The significance of signs depends on the agreement of many souls
  4. Signs are sensible but can signify intelligible things seen inwardly in the mind
- C. Signs and teaching (*On the Teacher*)
  1. We use signs to teach things
  2. But signs don't teach things!
  3. We learn the significance of signs from the things they signify, not the other way around (e.g., we don't understand a mathematical proof until after we "see" what it is about with our mind's eye)
  4. We learn intelligible things from a divine inner teacher

5. Signs serve to direct our attention, so we can look and see the thing for ourselves (that's why we write down mathematical proofs)

### III. Scripture and Interpretation

#### A. Outward words and inner vision

1. The need for Scripture: we cannot yet see for ourselves
2. The purpose of Scripture: by pointing us in the right direction, it builds up our love
3. The basis of Scripture: Christ incarnate in history

#### B. Interpretation as an act of love

1. Charity as motive of interpretation: we read Scripture because we long to see God
2. Charity as rule of interpretation: we should interpret Scripture so as to strengthen love for God and neighbor
3. Why difficulty is pleasing: solving the "hard passages" makes us love more
4. How Scripture helps us: it teaches us to love God

### IV. Sacraments and Grace

#### A. Definitions of *Sacrament*

1. Augustine's definition: "sacred sign" (*City of God* 10:5)
2. Medieval definition: sign of a sacred thing (*res*)
3. For the medieval theologians, Sacraments not only signify grace but confer it.

#### B. Sacramental validity—against the Donatists

1. The issue: why not rebaptize Donatists when they return to the Catholic Church?
2. The Catholic dilemma: if you don't rebaptize, you're admitting Donatist baptism was valid; if you do, you're doing just what the Donatists do!
3. The key concept: Sacramental validity. The Donatists' baptism is valid—not to be repeated
4. The key contrast: Sacramental efficacy. The Donatists' baptism doesn't do them any good so long as they're outside the Catholic Church.
5. The key metaphor: a soldier's tattoo [Latin *character*] is permanent and is not redone if he deserts and then returns

#### C. Sacramental efficacy and the Church

1. Sacraments are signs of the unity of Church (joined by love to Christ, the head of the Church)—like a *character* which signifies "this is a soldier of Christ"
2. The inward unity of the Church is the source of sacramental efficacy
3. Grace comes to us through an inward channel: from Christ through the Church to the individual Soul.
4. For Augustine, the Sacraments are external signs marking this inward channel, but for medieval and modern Roman Catholics Sacraments are themselves the channel, the external means of grace.

#### **Required Reading:**

Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* 2:1.1–10.15 and 3:5.9–28.39

#### **Supplementary Reading:**

Augustine, *On the Teacher*, 1.1–2.3 and 10.30–14.46 (in Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, pp. 69–71 and 90–101)

Augustine, *City of God* 10:1–6 (fundamental statement on Church and Sacrament)

Augustine, *City of God* 11:2–3 (fundamental statement on Christ and Scripture)

Bonner, *St Augustine of Hippo*, chapter 7 (on Augustine's anti-Donatist theology)

O'Donnell, *Augustine*, chapter 2 (on Augustine's theory of Scriptural interpretation)

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What do you think: do we learn things from words? If not, why not? If so, what do we learn from words, and how? Can you give an example of how words teach us something we didn't know before?
2. Can reading really be a form of love?

## Lecture 10

### The Inner Self

**Scope:** In this lecture we look at what is most original in Augustine's view of human nature, his concept of the self as a private inner space. Augustine's version of the inner self must be distinguished both from its ancient predecessors and from its modern descendants. Unlike others who developed modern versions of the inner self, Augustine believes that in turning inward we can find God. However, in contrast to pagan Platonists, Augustine does not believe the Soul is divine; hence for him God is not only within but also above the soul—to find God we must not only enter within ourselves but look above ourselves at something superior to us.

**Objectives—** Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to:

1. Describe the modern picture of the inner self as found in John Locke.
2. Describe the ancient picture of the inner world found in Plotinus.
3. Explain how Plotinus's picture of the inner world is derived from Plato's concept of the intelligible world.
4. Explain how Augustine's picture of the inner self differed from Locke's and Plotinus's.
5. Describe the Platonist view of the Fall of the Soul into bodies.
6. Explain what Augustine meant by saying to God: "You were within, I was without."

### Outline

- I. The Modern Inner Self: Locke (c. 1675)
  - A. The anxiety: solipsism (are we alone in our own inner world?)
  - B. The underlying concept: Locke's picture of the self as a dark inner room which we can never see out of (*Essay Concerning Human Understanding* 2:11.17)
  - C. The hidden history behind it: Augustinian inwardness
- II. The Ancient Soul: Platonism
  - A. Soul and the intelligible world in Plato
    1. Soul has a mode of being between the sensible and the intelligible
    2. Yet it is somehow "akin to the intelligible"
    3. But it "fell" into the sensible world and became embodied (the Fall of the Soul).
    4. To return to the intelligible world, it must be converted and purified.
    5. Its ultimate goal is to return to the intelligible world.
    6. Christian debts to Plato's view of the soul (immortal soul, Fall, going to heaven)
  - B. The inner world in Plotinus
    1. Plato's "Allegory of the Cave": the intelligible world above
    2. Plotinus: the Divine Mind is the intelligible world, and Platonic forms are its contents—ideas in the Mind of God
    3. Plotinus's concentric universe: One, Mind, and Soul. Picture the One as a dimensionless point at the center of the universe, the Divine Mind as a sphere of light illuminated by it, and the Soul as an outer sphere revolving around the Divine Mind.
    4. Plotinus's inward turn: imagine faces on the outside of the sphere of soul, looking outward. Those are our "individual" souls, looking at the external world (the "sensible world" as Plato calls it). What would happen if those souls could turn *into the inside*? They would see the Divine Mind and the One, and they would see *an inner world which they all had in common*.
    5. The Fall of the Soul in Plato becomes in Plotinus a turning toward external things.

### III. The Augustinian Inner Self

- A. Inward turn without divinity of the soul
  - 1. Augustine's inner space is not the Divine Mind but a private, individual world
  - 2. For Augustine, memory is like a vast inner palace—not a dark inner room! It has courtyards which are open to the sun above. A divine light shines down into it.
  - 3. Hence Augustine's Platonist vision moves “in then up”: first entering into the private inner space of the self and then looking up at God shining above the soul
- B. Augustine's inner world is private only because of sin
  - 1. There can be no spatial separation in the nonspatial inner world
  - 2. Hence only our darkened will separates us from the light of God above
  - 3. And only conflict of wills, which is due to earthly loves, separates one soul from another.
  - 4. Because of the Fall, our bodies are opaque, hiding our souls from one another, and we must use words and other outward signs to communicate with one another
  - 5. In heaven, the separation between souls shall be overcome, and we shall see into each other's minds
- C. Comparison with Locke
  - 1. For Augustine, the true reality is not the external world but God within.
  - 2. Augustine's inner space is not dark but filled with light from above. It has no roof!
  - 3. For Augustine, the privacy of the inner world is unnatural, born in sin. We were not created to be alone in our private worlds but to enjoy God together.
- D. Comparison with Plotinus
  - 1. For Augustine, the inner self is not divine
  - 2. A believer in Christ Incarnate and the Resurrection of the Body cannot turn away from all outward things
  - 3. Drawbacks of Christian Platonism: is the inward turn looking in the wrong place?

#### Required Reading:

Augustine, *Confessions* 7:10.16 and 10:6.8–27.38

#### Supplementary Reading:

Armstrong, "Plotinus" in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 195–268

Plato, "Allegory of the Cave" (*Republic* 7:514a–521b)

Plato, *Phaedrus* 244a–257b (on the Fall of the Soul)

Plotinus, *Ennead* 5:1 (One, Mind, and Soul)

Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, chapter 7

#### Questions to Consider:

- 1. Do you think we have an inner self like that which Augustine describes (or Locke or Plotinus)? What other ways are there of conceiving the self?
- 2. Is "inward" the right direction to look to find God? Does it make more sense to seek God inside or outside yourself?

## Lecture 11

### The Trinity and the Soul

**Scope:** Having examined in the previous lecture Augustine's concept of human persons, we turn now to Augustine's concept of God as three persons yet one God, in accordance with the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity. After summarizing Augustine's approach to the Nicene doctrine, we will look at his most distinctive contribution to trinitarian theology, the notion that there are traces (*vestigia*) of the Trinity that can be discerned in the triadic structure of the soul.

**Objectives—** Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to:

1. State the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity.
2. Contrast the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity with subordinationist doctrines of the Trinity.
3. Explain what is one and what is three about God, according to the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity.
4. Summarize the issues addressed in Augustine's treatise *On the Trinity*.
5. Explain how the triadic structure of the Soul reflects the Trinity according to Augustine.

### Outline

#### I. The Nicene doctrine of the Trinity

##### A. The full divinity of Christ

1. Note that in what follows we are always talking about the *pre-incarnate* Christ, not Christ the man but the eternal Word of God prior to Christ's becoming human.
2. The subordinationist view, commonly held in the years before the Arian crisis, was that the eternal Word (i.e., Christ) was the mediator or intermediary between God and the **Creation**—lower than God but higher than every creature.
3. The Arian heretics (c. 320 A.D.) asked the crucial question: "well, isn't he part of the Creation then?" and answered "yes."
4. The orthodox (Nicene) fathers realized that the Arians' question was crucial but answered it "no."
5. The orthodox answer to this crucial question is encapsulated in the clause of the Nicene Creed which says Christ is *homo-ousios*, i.e., "of one essence" with the Father. This means that the pre-incarnate Christ is just as fully divine as the Father.

##### B. Augustine's formulation of the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity can be summarized in seven statements (*On Christian Doctrine* 1:5):

1. The Father is God
2. The Son is God
3. The Holy Spirit is God
4. The Father is not the Son
5. The Son is not the Holy Spirit
6. The Holy Spirit is not the Father
7. There is only one God

##### C. Commentary on Augustine's formulation:

1. The first three statements *identify* the Christian God by using names that come from the Bible.
2. The second three statements *distinguish* each of those named from the other two.
3. The last statement insists on *monotheism*, and it creates all the logical difficulties in the doctrine of the Trinity.

##### D. The key logical issues of Nicene trinitarian doctrine are issues about unity and distinction within the Trinity:

1. A key question facing the Greek Church Fathers around 380 A.D. was: if Nicene trinitarianism is true, then *are there not three Gods?*



2. Their answer was: in the Trinity there is only one will and one work—hence only one God. This is how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are different from Peter, Paul, and John, who have three different wills and works.
  3. This answer leads eventually to the doctrine of *divine simplicity*—that everything in God is simple, not made up of parts aside from those that pertain to the difference between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
  4. But that leads to the next question, which Augustine asked: if they are not three Gods, then—*three what?*
  5. The *terminological* answer to Augustine's question is: they are three *hypostases* (abstract Greek term for "individual being") or three *persons* (Latin *personae*, meaning "individual rational being").
  6. The *logical* answer to Augustine's question (which Augustine works out in great detail) is that the three persons of the Trinity are distinguished from one another not by their essence (for they have only one essence, as the Nicene Creed makes clear) but by their relations to one another: e.g., the Son is *begotten* by the Father, the Holy Spirit *proceeds from* the Father and the Son, etc. These relations of begetting and proceeding are what make them three distinct persons or hypostases.
- E. Problems with the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity
1. Arithmetic and incomprehensibility: the doctrine literally does not add up. Nicene doctrine names three distinct individual beings as God and then says they don't add up to three Gods. Hence Nicene theologians must say God is beyond counting, beyond number—and thus beyond rational understanding. This was, however, a very common thing to say about God in the Platonist philosophical tradition.
  2. Immanent Trinity and Economic Trinity: what does this strange mystery have to do with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit encountered in the Bible?

## II. Augustine on the Trinity

### A. The structure of the treatise *On the Trinity*

1. Books 1–4 are concerned with the *theophanies*, i.e., the visible manifestations of God in the Bible. Augustine argues that no visible appearance can represent God adequately and hence that none of the biblical theophanies reveals the trinitarian structure of God
2. Books 5–7 spell out the logic of Nicene doctrine (as above)
3. Books 8–15 address the question: since the logic of the doctrine of the Trinity is so strange and none of the theophanies explain it, by what means are we to conceive of the trinitarian God? This is the most original (and distinctively Augustinian) part of the treatise. It focuses on:

### B. Traces of the Trinity in the soul (*vestigia trinitatis*)

1. As the soul was the clue to the incorporeal nature of God in *Confessions* 7, so here the soul is the clue to the trinitarian structure of God.
2. Augustine's key notion is that the human self is triadic in structure, in a way that reflects the trinitarian structure of God.
3. The triad of self-knowledge: Memory, Understanding, and Will. Each one of these *is* the mind, yet each is distinct—like the Trinity.
4. The triad of self-love: Lover, Beloved, Love are one and yet distinct from one another.
5. For Augustine, the Holy Spirit is like the bond of love that unites Father and Son (the love between the Father and the Son *is* the Holy Spirit).

### C. A distinctively Augustinian theme: to understand God, begin by looking at the soul!

## Required Reading:

Augustine, *On the Trinity*, books 8–10 (in Burnaby, *Augustine: Later Works*)

## Supplementary Reading:

Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, chapters 9–10

TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, pp. 294–301

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Does the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity sound to you like a confused piece of nonsense or a deep mystery? (And how can you tell the difference?)
2. Do you think our inner selves really do have the triadic structure Augustine suggests? Why?

## Lecture 12

### The City of God

**Scope:** After looking at the structure of human and divine persons in the previous two lectures, here we look at Augustine's view of how human and divine persons interact in history. This brings us to Augustine's social and political theory, his account of the nature of fallen human society (the "Earthly City"), and the restoration of true human community by God (the "City of God"). From this standpoint we cast a glance back over the whole structure of Augustine's thought, note some of its problems, and think a moment about its future.

**Objectives—** Upon completion of this lecture, the student should be able to:

1. Contrast the "Earthly City" and the "City of God" in Augustine's thought.
2. Define Augustine's concept of *community*.
3. Summarize Augustine's critique of the Roman Empire.
4. Discuss Augustine's view of politics.
5. Explain the connection between the Church and the ultimate unification of humanity according to Augustine.
6. Discuss the pros and cons of Augustinian inwardness.

### Outline

#### I. Introduction to the *City of God*

- A. The treatise: the *City of God* is Augustine's most massive literary work, consisting of twenty-two books that took him almost fifteen years to write. It is the most comprehensive statement of his mature thought.
- B. The occasion: when Rome is sacked in 410, some pagans blame Christianity, saying the city would have remained invincible if it had stuck with its ancient gods. The *City of God* is Augustine's answer.
- C. The theme: humanity is divided into *two cities* or communities:
  1. The Earthly City, which seeks happiness in earthly things, by worshipping false gods
  2. The heavenly city, or City of God, which worships the one true God and seeks eternal life with him

#### II. The Earthly City: the social life of fallen humanity

- A. What makes a community?
  1. According to Cicero's definition, a community is bound together by agreement about justice (19:21)
  2. But Augustine objects that there is no true justice in a community that refuses to give God his due—yet they are still a community.
  3. So Augustine argues that communities are bound together instead by agreement in what they love (19:24).
  4. Hence the two cities are distinguished by different loves: the one loves earthly things (or itself), while the other loves the eternal God.
  5. This accounts for the religious difference between the two cities: the one seeks happiness from false gods, the other from the one true God.
- B. Augustine on religion
  1. *Religion* (Latin *religio*) originally meant something like "form of worship," e.g., sacrifice, ritual, and prayer—something outward and visible.
  2. Augustine, predictably, reconceives religion in terms of the heart and its inner will for blessedness. Our religion is determined by where we seek our happiness. For instance, Augustine defines true sacrifice as "every work performed in order to unite us in holy fellowship with God, aimed at the ultimate goal of becoming truly happy" (10:6)

3. This provides Augustine with a philosophical analysis of the nature of paganism. *Paganism* is not just belief in many gods (for Christians too believe in many immortal beings: the angels, who are just like what pagans call *gods*). *Paganism* is the inward *worship* of many gods, i.e., seeking one's ultimate happiness from them.
  4. This means that the interesting challenges Augustine must face are from non-Christians who seek their happiness from the one Supreme God, i.e., from Platonists and Jews.
  5. The Platonists (in the *City of God* as in the *Confessions*) are blamed for their intellectual pride, their participation in pagan worship, and their refusal to embrace the humility of Christ (cf. books 8–10)
  6. Augustine blames the Jews too for not believing in Christ, but he also retells their history in the Old Testament as signifying the eternal life brought by Christ (in books 15–18). The Jews of the Old Testament were the primary members of the City of God at that time.
- C. The Roman *virtue* so admired by the pagans consisted of the *lust for domination* and the *desire for praise* or earthly glory (5:12–20)—that was the common love that united Rome as "the capital of the Earthly City" (15:5).
- D. The peace of the Earthly City (*City of God*, book 19)
1. Peace is the ultimate goal of war, of all politics, indeed of all life (19:10–13): the ordered harmony of body and soul and of mind with mind.
  2. Conflict, wars, and violence inevitably arise in the Earthly City because it is a community in which everybody loves private goods that cannot be shared (15:3–5), as opposed to loving God, who can be shared by all with no loss to any.
  3. The heavenly city seeks the peace of the Earthly City as a real but not ultimate good, promoting "the compromise of human wills concerning things pertaining to this mortal life" (19:17). Hence Christians are good citizens.
  4. The City of God is a sojourner in its pilgrimage on earth, seeking eternal peace, being happy in its hope, not in present reality (19:16).
  5. Until the Last Judgment the two cities coexist on earth, mingled together, sharing the same temporal goods but using them differently. "As long as the two cities are still mixed together, we also make use of the peace of Babylon" (19:26).

### III. The City of God: the Church in history

- A. The community of the predestined
1. The two cities have two different predestined ends: the one in condemnation and the other in eternal life (15:1)
  2. The City of God includes both the blessed angels and humans predestined to eternal life
- B. The unity of humanity restored
1. In the beginning, humanity was united in Adam ("For we all were in that one man, when we all *were* that one man" [13:14])
  2. Adam's fall into sin is the source of all separation and conflict between human beings (that sinful love or cupidity for things that can't be shared).
  3. The blessedness of heaven will include the reunification of saved humanity. No longer divided by sin and conflict of will and the opacity of mortal bodies, we will be able to see into each others' minds: "our thoughts will be open and obvious to one another" (22:29).
- C. The Body of Christ
1. As we were once united with Adam before sin, so in order to be redeemed from sin we must be united with Christ
  2. Humanity is united with Christ in the Body of Christ—the Church, of which Christ is head
  3. The Body of Christ is united—as always—by love, through which Christ shares human mortality and humans share Christ's righteousness and blessedness. This is the blessedness that makes the City of God happy in hope and the final reunification of the human race.

#### IV. Some questions about Augustine's overall project

- A. Does the *Resurrection of the Body* matter to Augustine as much as it should? He believes in it, to be sure, but does it make any real difference to his understanding of final blessedness, which seems to be ultimately a matter of the state of our souls?
- B. Does *history* matter more than Augustine realizes? Consider two episodes of biblical history about which Augustine has surprisingly little to say in the *City of God*:
  - 1. When God rescues Israel from Egypt, the Bible seems to regard this as a revelation of who he is—not just a foreshadowing of future eternal happiness
  - 2. When Christ is crucified and then raised from the dead, the Bible again seems to regard this as a revelation of who God is. This is something that happens outside us, in the literal flesh of Christ—not something we find by turning inward!
- C. The frightening thing about Augustine's doctrine of grace is the inscrutability of God's choices (see conclusion of lecture 8). What would have to change in Augustine's thought for him to welcome God's choices as good news, not an inscrutable depth but a revelation of who God is in all his goodness? My suggestion is that Augustine needs a deeper appreciation of external things—of the biblical claim that God entered the human story, speaks human words, and bears human flesh. The biblical God, unlike the Platonist First Principle, is someone who makes choices—because he is someone who is present in human history.

#### **Required Reading:**

Augustine, *City of God*, book 19

#### **Supplementary Reading:**

Markus, *Saeculum*, chapters 3 and 4

O'Donnell, *Augustine*, chapter 3

#### **Questions to Consider:**

- 1. Assuming Augustine is right about the inward nature of religion, how would you describe the religion of *your* heart?
- 2. How good a guide do you think Augustine is to the meaning of the Christian faith?

## Timeline

- 358 B.C. ....d. Plato
- 43 B.C. ....d. Cicero
- 30? A.D. ....d. Christ
- c. 100 .....New Testament completed
- 270 .....d. Plotinus
- 277 .....d. Mani in Persia
- 296 .....Manichaeism begins to spread in the Roman Empire.
- 312 .....Constantine consolidates his position as Roman emperor, becomes a Christian, and over the course of the next twenty-five years makes Christianity a tolerated religion within the Empire.
- 325 .....Council of Nicaea teaches that Christ is "of one essence with the Father."
- 354 .....Augustine born in Thagaste in the Roman province of Africa.
- 371 .....Augustine goes to Carthage to pursue education in rhetoric. There he encounters Cicero's *Hortensius* and later joins the Manichaeans.
- 372 .....Augustine takes a concubine, with whom he will live faithfully for the next dozen years. Within a year or two she bears him a son, Adeodatus.
- 375 .....Augustine returns to Thagaste to teach rhetoric; within a year comes the death of his unnamed friend and Augustine's return to Carthage.
- 381 .....Council of Constantinople completes and ratifies Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (commonly called the Nicene Creed).
- 383 .....Augustine leaves Africa for Rome in order to pursue a career in oratory and public office.
- 384 .....Augustine makes a promising career move to Milan, meets Bishop Ambrose, begins moving from Manichaeism to catholic Christianity.
- 385 .....Monica rejoins Augustine in Milan. He sends his concubine away in order to become engaged to a Christian heiress.
- 386 .....Augustine reads the "books of the Platonists," solves some key intellectual difficulties, and resolves upon a life of philosophy as a catholic Christian: his conversion. He retires to Cassiciacum, a villa outside Milan, and begins his career as a Christian writer with the Soliloquies and other writings.
- 387 .....Augustine is baptized by Ambrose in Milan on Easter Sunday, together with his friend Alypius and his son Adeodatus. Later that year he goes to Ostia, where his mother Monica dies.
- 388 .....After staying in Rome for much of the year, Augustine returns to Africa, establishing a monastic community in Thagaste with Alypius and other friends.
- 390? .....Adeodatus dies.
- 391 .....On a visit to Hippo, Augustine is ordained against his will as a presbyter (i.e., priest).
- 395 .....Augustine is consecrated bishop of Hippo.
- c. 397 .....Augustine begins writing the *Confessions* (it takes him some four years to finish), writes most of the treatise *On Christian Doctrine*, and within a couple years begins writing *On the Trinity*, which takes him almost twenty years to finish.
- 410 .....Rome falls, for the first time in nearly 1,000 years, to the German ("barbarian") general Alaric, occasioning a cultural and political crisis to which the *City of God* is a response.
- 411 .....In a Conference, or "Collation," at Carthage, a public debate is held between Donatist and Catholic bishops over the legality of the Donatist Church, which leads to the official suppression of the Donatist Church by the Empire. Augustine plays a prominent role.

- 412 .....Augustine begins writing against Pelagianism (the treatise *On the Spirit and the Letter* and the treatise *On the Merits and Remission of Sin and the Baptism of Infants*), thus initiating a controversy that will occupy his attention for the rest of his life.
- 413 .....Augustine begins writing *The City of God*. It will take him fourteen years to complete all twenty-two books.
- 427 .....Augustine begins writing a final series of treatises against Pelagianism (including *On Grace and Free Will* and *On the Predestination of the Saints*), dealing with the relation of Free Will, Grace, and Predestination.
- 430 .....Augustine dies in Hippo while the Vandals are at the gates.
- 431 .....The Council of Ephesus teaches that Christ's flesh is "life-giving flesh."
- 451 .....The Council of Chalcedon teaches that Christ is "true God and true man."

## Glossary

**Africa:** an area of the Roman Empire covering the western part of what we now call North Africa, including what is now Algeria and Tunisia.

**almsgiving:** giving to the poor. Not to be confused with Charity, which for Augustine means something much larger.

**Arian:** refers to the heresy of *Arianism* (founded by a theologian named Arius), which taught that the pre-incarnate Christ, the eternal Word of God, is a created thing, different from God the Creator.

**Authority:** in ancient usage, this word refers not to political sovereignty but to the authority of a teacher. Hence a grammarian is an authority on grammar, and the Catholic Church's authority means its God-given authorization to teach the Gospel of Christ.

**baptism:** Christian ritual washing used as an initiation into the Church, closely associated with the concept of regeneration or spiritual rebirth.

**Carthage:** largest city in Roman Africa; site of Augustine's higher education and later a place visited often by Augustine the bishop on Church business.

**catholic:** in Augustine's time, this term meant the opposite of *heretic* and thus was synonymous with *orthodox*. Both Protestants and Roman Catholics are descendants of Augustine as Catholic theologian.

**Chalcedon:** city in Asia Minor, site of Church council that defined the orthodox doctrine of Christology in 451, speaking of Christ as "true God and true man."

**character** (Latin word): a permanent mark something like a tattoo, given to a soldier when he joins the army—and not redone if he deserts and then returns to the army. Augustine uses this to illustrate why the Catholic Church does not rebaptize Donatists when they rejoin the Catholics.

**Charity** (Latin *caritas*, Greek *agape*): in Augustine (and Roman Catholic theology in general) this term refers to the kind of love that fulfills Christ's twofold command to love God with all your heart, mind, and soul, and to love your neighbor as yourself. See *love*, *concupiscence*.

**Christology:** the Christian doctrine about who Christ is, as both divine and human (in contrast to the doctrine of the Trinity, which concerns Christ only in his divine nature as the eternal Son of God).

**Church Fathers:** the orthodox Christian theologians in the four or five centuries after the New Testament, whose interpretation of the Bible and formulation of Christian doctrines (such as the doctrine of the Trinity) became authoritative for the later Christian tradition.

**concupiscence:** the love of created things as if they were God, i.e., as if they could ultimately make you happy.

**Constantinople:** capital city of the eastern half of the Roman Empire, site of a Church council that in 381 completed the formulation of the orthodox, Nicene doctrine of the Trinity.

**conversion:** from the Latin verb *convertere*, meaning literally "to turn," this word in Augustine can mean turning one's attention (e.g., from lower things to higher things), turning one's desires (e.g., to God), or decisively changing the direction of one's life. It was also used by Christians as a technical term for joining the Church. One typically converted *to* something (e.g., Christ, the Church, God, Wisdom, Virtue, etc.) by turning one's heart toward it.

**corporeal:** synonym for *bodily* (from Latin *corpus*, meaning *body*). Opposite of nonbodily or incorporeal.

**corruption:** in Augustine, a technical term meaning the decay, loss, or destruction of the natural good in something. All evil is a form of corruption.

**creature:** a technical term in Christian theology meaning "something created by God," (hence "a part of Creation"), in contrast to the Creator, who is God.

**creed:** a brief verbal formula designed as a summary of the Christian faith. See *Nicene Creed*.

**cupidity:** *concupiscence*. Augustine often pairs this term with *charity* for purposes of contrast. *Charity* and *cupidity* are terms that nearly rhyme but name two forms of love that go in opposite directions.



**doctrine:** from the Latin word for *teaching*, a Christian term for explicit and authoritative teachings of the Christian faith (e.g., the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity).

**Donatists:** the African schismatics who separated themselves from the Catholic Church, regarding it as impure and its baptism as invalid.

**Economic Trinity:** the Trinity as it operates in history in the economy of salvation. (*Economic* comes from a Greek word meaning *dispensation* or *plan*—originally a plan of household management. Hence the "economy of salvation" is God's plan for managing and saving the whole world). See *immanent Trinity*.

**election** (from the Latin word for *choice*, related to the biblical concept of God's *chosen* people): a technical term in Augustinian theology referring to God's eternal choice to give grace to some people (but not others). See Romans 11:5 (in the King James translation): "the election of grace."

**enjoyment** (Latin *fruitio* from the verb *frui*; sometimes translated *fruition*): a technical term in Augustine meaning the form of love in which we cling to something with delight for its own sake. Contrast *use*, below.

**embodiment:** in Platonist philosophy, the event by which the soul is united to the body.

**essence** (Greek *ousia*, Latin *substantia*; often translated *substance* or *being*): whatever it is that makes something the kind of thing it is. (Different philosophers, such as Platonists or Aristotelians, will have different concepts of what this is—i.e., they have different definitions of the term *essence*). Roughly, the term *essence* designates something like human nature, while the term *hypostasis* (see below) designates a particular *instance* of human nature.

**Eucharist:** the Christian ritual of the Body and Blood of Christ, represented by bread and wine.

**Evil:** anything that is not as it should be, a defect in being, or corruption of something's natural goodness; includes not only *sin* (evil of will) but also *ignorance* and *error* (evil of mind), *disease* (evil of body), *disorder* (evil in the universe) and *death* (evil of soul).

**expressionism:** the theory that outward signs (gestures, words, sacraments) get their significance by expressing something that is within the soul.

**Faith:** in Augustine, this always means belief *in Christ*, in accordance with Catholic teaching. It comes before Charity and leads to it.

**Fall:** a story about how evil came into the world through some defect of souls at the beginning of things. Platonism, Manichaeism, and Catholic Christianity all have stories about the Fall. Not to be confused with *Original Sin*, which is a specifically Catholic doctrine.

**Father:** the First Person of the Christian Trinity.

**grace:** in Augustine, a gift of the Holy Spirit which inwardly heals the soul of its sin and weakness and helps it to obey the command of God by infusing or "pouring" charity into it.

**Greek:** the language of most ancient classical philosophy (e.g., Plato and Aristotle) as well as of the New Testament and most of the important works of Church Fathers before Augustine; the predominant language in the eastern half of the Roman Empire.

**happiness** (Latin *beatitudo* or *beata vita*, Greek *eudaimonia*; often translated in theological contexts as *blessedness* or *beatitude*): a technical term in ancient philosophy meaning the ultimate fulfillment of human life. Unlike the modern term, it does not necessarily mean a feeling; its meaning is closer to *fulfillment* or even *success*. Whatever makes a life ultimately successful is happiness. Hence different philosophers or theologians will have different concepts of what happiness consists of; e.g., hedonists will answer that what makes a human life ultimately successful is feeling good (i.e., pleasure) while Platonists answer that happiness is in wisdom, and Christian Platonists like Augustine define this wisdom as seeing God in the *beatific vision* (i.e., literally, "the seeing which makes happy").

**heretic:** in Augustine's usage, a Christian who teaches unorthodox doctrines, e.g., about the Trinity. See *Manichaeism*, *csatholic*.

**Hippo:** city in Roman Africa, of which Augustine was bishop.

**homo-ousios:** key term in the Nicene Creed, Greek for "of one essence" (or "of one being" or "of one substance"; see *essence*). Used to confess Christ as equal to the Father in his divinity ("of one essence with the Father").

**hypostasis:** Greek term meaning "complete individual being," which Greek Church Fathers used to designate the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (see *person*). Redness, intelligence, and human nature, for instance, are not hypostases; Lassie, Socrates, and Christ are.

**Holy Spirit:** the Third Person or hypostasis of the Christian Trinity, associated especially with the life of the Church and the giving of grace.

**Immanent Trinity:** the Trinity (i.e., God) as he is in himself, eternally, apart from the Creation and the economy of salvation. See *Economic Trinity*.

**Incarnation:** a term meaning literally "to come into flesh." In Christian usage, this refers to the Son of God's becoming human by becoming the man Jesus Christ. According to orthodox Christian belief, no one but Christ is the incarnation of God; hence in Christian usage the term *Incarnation* refers only to him. It is thus not to be confused with more general terms like *embodiment* or *reincarnation*.

**incorporeal:** synonym for *nonbodily*. Opposite of *corporeal*.

**intelligible:** in Platonist philosophy, a technical term meaning "an object of understanding" or something perceived by the mind rather than by the senses. Opposite of *sensible*.

**justification:** the process by which God makes sinners just. See *righteousness*.

**Latin:** the language of ancient Rome, spoken by Cicero, Ambrose, and Augustine, and subsequently the language of intellectuals throughout the medieval period in the West and of the Roman Catholic Church to this day.

**Love** (Latin *amor*, Greek *eros*): in Platonism, the desire that unites us with an object. For Augustine all our motivation and action stems from love of one kind or another. Hence some loves are good (see *Charity*, above) and some are sinful (see *concupiscence*).

**Manichaeism:** a combination of Persian religion, heretical Christianity, and severe asceticism which was influential, though illegal, throughout much of the Roman Empire in Augustine's time.

**Milan:** city in northern Italy. At the time Augustine lived there (the 380s) it was the home of the Roman Emperor, and its bishop was St. Ambrose.

**misery** (Latin *miseria*, sometimes translated *wretchedness*): a technical term that, in ancient philosophy and medieval theology, meant lack of happiness. See *happiness*, also a technical term.

**neoplatonism:** the Platonist tradition that stemmed from Plotinus; the form of Platonism that influenced Augustine and subsequent Christian thinkers.

**Nicaea** (pronounced "nigh-SEE-a"): city in Asia Minor, site in 325 of a Church council at which the decisive step was taken in defining the orthodox Christian doctrine of the Trinity: Christ was described as "of one essence with the Father."

**Nicene** (pronounced "nigh-SEEN"): having to do with the Council of Nicaea or the trinitarian theology that was formulated there.

**Nicene Creed** (called by scholars the **Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed** because it began to be formulated at Nicaea but was not ratified in its complete form until the Council of Constantinople): the Creed that encapsulates the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity.

**Original Sin:** technical term in Augustine's theology (and subsequent Catholic theology) meaning the guilt all souls are born with by virtue of being offspring of Adam. (Adam's first sin is not Original Sin; our sharing of responsibility for Adam's sin is.)

**orthodox:** a term meaning "teaching the right thing to believe." From Augustine's perspective this means the same thing as "catholic." The orthodox tradition of Christian thought (not to be confused with the Orthodox tradition, capital *O*) includes Roman Catholics and Protestants as well as the Eastern Orthodox.

**Pelagianism:** the heretical teaching that fallen human beings do not need the special help of grace to obey God and be righteous. Or "pursuit of wisdom."

**perseverance:** in Augustine, this means adhering to a life of charity (and through repentance recovering from lapses in charity) until you die. Salvation ultimately depends on perseverance, because those who die without charity are damned.

**person:** from the Latin *persona*, meaning *mask*. Originally this referred to characters in a play (in ancient drama all the characters wore masks), then to characters in the drama of life. Nicene theologians applied this term to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: they are three persons but not three Gods. See *hypostasis*.

**perversion:** from a Latin word meaning to turn or twist away. When used by Augustine, this means the turning of the will from God (it does *not* refer specifically to sexual perversions).

**Platonism:** the philosophical tradition that began with Plato. Its most important representative was Plotinus, the founder of what scholars now call *neoplatonism*.

**philosophy:** translation of a Greek word meaning "love of wisdom."

**predestination:** in Augustine, this term means God's eternal plan to give grace to whomever He chooses.

**res:** Latin for *thing* (sometimes translated *reality*). Augustine typically pairs this word with *signum* (sign), *nomen* (name), or *verbum* (word), each of which signifies some *res* or thing.

**rhetoric:** the art of eloquent and persuasive speaking; until his conversion Augustine made a career of teaching rhetoric.

**righteousness:** the old translation for the biblical word meaning *justice*. In the Bible this is the quality of someone who obeys God; in Paul and Augustine, it is also the product of the process of justification.

**Sacrament:** solemn Christian ritual involving use of material objects, e.g., baptism and Eucharist.

**schismatic:** someone separated from the Catholic Church not by false teaching (see *heretic*) but by breach of love. See *Donatists*.

**sensible:** in Platonist philosophy, a technical term referring to objects that can be perceived by one of the five senses. Opposite of *intelligible*. Every bodily thing is a sensible thing.

**signum:** Latin for *sign*. Often paired with *res* (see above).

**simple:** a technical term in ancient philosophy meaning incomposite, i.e., not made up of parts. A simple thing cannot be fragmented or dissolved into its components because it has no components.

**solipsism** (from Latin for "only the self"): the belief that I am alone in the universe.

**Son of God:** in Christian theology, a technical term meaning Christ and often referring specifically to his eternal existence as God.

**soul:** the principle of life in a body (Augustine will often use this word almost synonymously with the word *life*). In Platonism the soul is regarded as nonbodily and immortal.

**subordinationism:** the view that the pre-incarnate Christ, the eternal Word of God, is an intermediary between God and the Creation—lower than God the Father but higher than the created world.

**temporal:** the opposite of *eternal*; having to do with time rather than eternity. Hence closely related (in Augustine's usage) to words like *mortal*, *perishable*, *transient*, *fleeting*.

**Thagaste:** Augustine's place of birth and hometown in Africa.

**theophany:** Greek for "manifestation of God." A theological term designating visible manifestations of God in the Bible—i.e., any incident in which someone seems to see or hear God in person.

**traditores:** from the Latin word for "hand over," this word refers to Christians who handed over the Scriptures to the Roman authorities during the imperial persecution of Christianity. Zealous Christians felt about the *traditores* the same way that members of the French Resistance felt about collaborators (Frenchmen who collaborated with the Nazis during the German occupation of France in World War II). The Donatists contended that the Catholic Church in Africa was impure because some of its bishops had been *traditores*.

**Trinity:** the Christian teaching that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—one God.

**use:** in Augustine, a technical term meaning the form of love in which objects are taken as means to the end of obtaining what we may enjoy. *Use* is to *enjoyment* as *means* is to *end*. See *enjoyment*.

**will:** the soul's power to choose.

## Biographical Notes

**The Unnamed Friend.** A close friend of Augustine who died when he was a teenager, leaving a huge wound in Augustine's heart (*Confessions*, book 4).

**An Unnamed Woman.** Augustine's concubine from about 372 to 386.

**Adeodatus** (372?–90?). Augustine's son by his concubine (the unnamed woman, above); baptized with Augustine, he died a few years later.

**Alypius** (?–430?). Augustine's best friend; a major figure in the *Confessions* and a fellow bishop in Africa.

**Ambrose, St.** (339?–97). Church father; bishop of Milan after 374; influential in bringing about Augustine's conversion and return to the Catholic Church in 386; he baptized Augustine on Easter Sunday, 387.

**Anthony, St.** (?–356?). One of the first monks in the Egyptian desert; a story about him plays a crucial role in Augustine's conversion.

**Augustine, St.** (35–430). Bishop of Hippo in Africa from 395 until his death; the most influential of the western Church Fathers.

**Cicero** (106–43 B.C.). Roman orator and politician; author of philosophical dialogues that were Augustine's main source of knowledge about philosophy prior to his encounter with the books of the Platonists.

**Locke, John** (1632–1704). English philosopher, founding figure of British empiricism, and originator of the picture of the inner self as a dark inner room.

**Mani** (216–77; also called **Manes** or **Manichaeus**). Persian religious leader and founder of Manichaeism.

**Monica, St.** (332?–87). Augustine's mother, a devout Catholic who instilled in him the name of Christ from his infancy, and whose prayers and tears helped bring him back into the Church after his time as a Manichaean.

**Patricius** (?–371). Augustine's father, a not very devout Catholic and not very faithful husband about whom Augustine tells us very little.

**Paul, St.** (?–63?). Apostle and author of many of the letters in the New Testament; a central inspiration for Augustine's theology of grace.

**Pelagius** (?–c. 430). Originator of the Pelagian heresy.

**Plato** (427–358 B.C.). Founder of the philosophical tradition that had the most influence on Augustine's thought.

**Plotinus** (205?–70). Pagan Platonist philosopher, author of a collection of treatises called the *Enneads*; his writings are the single most important philosophical influence on Augustine.

**Ponticianus** (sometimes spelled **Pontitianus**). Friend of Augustine who visits him in Milan and tells him stories about Christians choosing a life of asceticism, thereby sparking Augustine's conversion.

**Victorinus.** Roman rhetorician and convert to Christianity, author of a series of treatises on the Trinity; his entrance into the Church is held up as a model for Augustine to follow in *Confessions*, book 8, just prior to Augustine's conversion.

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